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BIOGRAPHIES
OF INDIVIDUAL SCHOOLS
UNDER
THE TORONTO BOARD OF EDUCATION

I.
YORK STREET
SCHOOL



ISSUED BY
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BIOGRAPHIES OF INDIVIDUAL SCHOOLS

INTRODUCTORY

Like every school in Toronto the York Street School has its history. Its individuality has fluctuated from period to period as its clientele has modified, as its professional staff has changed and as the conception of the relation of the school to its community has developed. This history, these changes, and the present distinct individuality of the York Street School, have impelled the Bureau of Municipal Research to make available to the general public some of the results of its inquiries. Later on, the Bureau hopes to publish similar biographical sketches of other type-schools in the city in the hope that the interest of the general public in the processes of education may be stimulated. Educational progress depends fundamentally on public interest and understanding.

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I.

THE YORK STREET SCHOOL

Historical Note.

This school is one of the oldest in the city. The Dufferin, Old Howard, Ryerson, Wellesley and York Street School buildings all date from the decade, 1870-1880, while the Victoria Street School building is much older. All of these buildings have since been reconstructed or enlarged.

Mr. W. G. Frisby, the present principal, shortly after entering upon his duties, discovered a "log" of the school going back to its opening on February 17th, 1873, and giving a continuous record up to recent years. Mr. Frisby is continuing the account. When the volume is finished it should be sent to the Administration Building, to be placed in a fireproof vault, as it contains valuable historical material which should not be lost—a fate from which it has already had a very narrow escape. The record is of fascinating interest, containing as it does, not only statistics of attendance, but notes on discipline, prize-winners, public examinations attended by parents, and a thousand and one matters of great human interest. Mr. Frisby was kind enough to co-operate with the Bureau by making abstracts from the "log."

When the school began it was, in effect, two schools, a boys' and a girls', under a master and a mistress. The number of boys in attendance on the opening day was 111, and the number of girls 66. This record is signed by Mr. J. W. Porter, then Inspector.

The school started with the following supplies:

- 2 maps of the Eastern Hemisphere,
- 2 " " " Western Hemisphere,
- 2 " " Europe,
- 2 " " Africa,
- 2 " " America,
- 2 " " the British Isles,
- 2 " " " United States,
- 4 blank timetables,
- 4 cards of the Decalogue,
- 4 Bibles,
- 4 daily registers,
- 2 general registers, and
- 2 diaries.

When the school closed for vacation in 1873, prizes were distributed. The record would tend to show that most of the children in attendance at that time were of English and Scottish ancestry, only one foreign name appearing in the list of prize-winners.

The first reference to heating is in October, 1873, when the principal was authorized, whenever the temperature of the rooms fell to 60° Fahrenheit, to direct the caretaker to provide sufficient fuel to raise it to 65°, at which it should be maintained, as nearly as possible. On October 20th, sawed wood was ordered, and on October 27th the school was without either sawed wood or kindling.

On October 13th, one of the teachers informed the principal that "the girls' pump was broken."

On December 18th, 1873, the first public examination was held. Mr. Farley and Mr. W. B. McMurrich, local trustees, the Revs. Darling and Jeffreys, and about 100 others, were present. In the addresses the school was highly commended and particular reference was made to the needlework of the girls. Apparently, even in those days, many parents took a personal interest in education, and the school authorities gave opportunity to parents to show their interest at public school exercises. Apparently also in those days needlework was not regarded as a "frill."

That there were difficulties in discipline is indicated by the February and March, 1875, records of unruliness, when the same pupil was suspended twice—once for being drunk and once for bringing pipe, tobacco and matches to school.

A record of teachers' meetings also goes back until 1873. It is well kept and throws many interesting sidelights on the conduct of the schools. The prevailing difficulty every year seems to have been the securing of regular and prompt attendance. At the various meetings troublesome pupils were discussed and ways and means of improving their characters considered. Apparently the difficulties of teaching have not changed appreciably since schools were invented.

Several of the principals of the York Street School had long terms of tenure, but from September, 1918, to June, 1919, there were four principals. Such rapidity of change, especially in a school organized as the York Street School is at present, without principal's assistant or male class-room assistants, is extremely detrimental to the school.

The Penny Bank—A Unique Feature:

The Toronto Penny Bank, the first of its kind in Canada, is housed on the lower floor of this building, and handles school childrens' savings from schools all over the city. The York Street School itself holds the record for per pupil deposits among all the schools in the city and, it is said, of the Dominion. Many of the deposits, while in the names of the children, are, in reality, family savings, and withdrawals during the severe winter months are often for coal and clothing. During November, 1919, the deposits per pupil were \$1.30. It is easy to see what effect the location of such an institution in the neighborhood has in relieving distress through the encouragement of thrift. Many of the boys are particularly ambitious to accumulate

savings. In some cases the principal acts as treasurer during the week for individual boys who are doubtful of their ability to withstand temptation when passing candy stores and moving picture shows. On the occasion of one visit one vest pocket of the principal was dedicated to Izzie G——t and the other to Max Y——y. On the day of deposit Izzie and Max would requisition the purses and turn over the contents to the Bank.

The citizens who founded the movement and have fostered it since, deserve the unqualified thanks of those who believe in education. The Penny Bank is not only educating the children of the York Street School in thrift, but also their parents and the whole neighborhood. The Penny Bank is the first of those community features which should finally make the York Street School a model institutional school, permeating the life of the child and adult community with ideals of the highest Canadian citizenship.

The Physical Plant.

The Building and Grounds: The building is an old-fashioned brick and stone building, and has eight class-rooms. The playground has an area of about 6,300 square feet—a space entirely inadequate for the enrolment of 280. The play area is well planked over and contains considerable play apparatus, basketball being most encouraged as most likely to develop the physical vigor and resourcefulness of which so many of the children stand most in need. The playground is frequently littered with paper and other refuse from nearby alleys.

Caretaking: The class-rooms have recently been re-decorated. The result is most pleasing and most hygienic, not only from the standpoint of cleanliness, but also from the standpoint of illumination. It is unfortunate that the greater part of the work was carried on during the early weeks of the session, but the previous condition of the building was so extremely undesirable that the interruption of the school work by the presence of workmen was preferable to carrying on school operations in its former unaesthetic and unhygienic environment. The former caretaker said that the air of the neighborhood was so full of soot and dust that it was impossible to keep the walls and woodwork clean. At any rate they were not clean. Kalsomine, said to have been but two years old, was dirty, and soot flakes were to be found over the radiators and air inlets. The present caretaker has brought about an immense improvement. A hand rubbed over the woodwork even yet, however, produces results which make handshaking impossible.

It is doubtful whether conditions would have been so bad, but for the location of the "fresh air" intakes, below the street level. If the taking in of such "fresh" air had such marked effects on the walls, what must have been the effect on the lungs and the personal cleanliness of the pupils? Good results cannot be expected until the fresh air intakes are, say, 20 feet above the ground. Pending this change, if indeed it is feasible without altering the whole system, ventilation by window alone would be preferable.

In the kindergarten room the floor is so dirty, owing to circumstances which cannot be overcome by ordinary means, that it is not possible to allow the children to sit on the floor, as is usual, according to the best practice. As a result of a recent visit by the inspector of equipment, a linoleum is to be supplied in this room. The evidence from this and other schools is conclusive that the appointment of such an inspector did not come any too soon. All floors are swept daily after 4.00 p.m., and dusted daily, usually before 8.30 a.m. The floors are oiled with non-drying oil, so as to catch any dust particles falling on them, and are scrubbed once a term. They should be scrubbed much more frequently with the aid of some substance which would cut the oil. The dusting should be done invariably with specially treated cloths.

Lighting: The natural lighting of all the rooms but two is fairly satisfactory. The ratio of lighting space to floor space in one room is 1:7.2 and another 1:6.1. The ratio of 1:5 is the minimum allowable. On dark days the illumination is not sufficient, particularly in the late afternoon hours of winter. The principal's office is lighted principally by electricity, although it has some indirect natural light. The building is now electrically lighted throughout.

Heating and Ventilation: The building is heated directly by steam from a tubular boiler. The rooms and corridors are adequately supplied with radiators. The ventilation of the class-rooms is by gravity. The stacks are supplied with heating coils. The toilets in the basements, as a result of the recent installations, are ventilated by fans. This is an immense improvement. The teachers make free use of the windows in ventilation. Defects in the gravity system make this especially necessary. The results, as far as the apparent comfort and activity of the children are concerned, seemed entirely satisfactory. The thermostats, with one exception, seemed to be working properly. The thermometers are placed near the air inlets. There is no humidifying apparatus, and, so far as could be learned, no means are at hand for testing the relative humidity of the air. Proper humidity of the air is just as important as its purity.

Drinking Water: Bubblers are placed in the yard and in the basement. None are found above the basement. The basement bubblers are in the toilet rooms, not far removed from the toilets. Occasionally children slip into the teachers' toilet room to drink from the tap. No paper cups are supplied.

Toilets: The floors of the toilets are not well drained. There is no floor drain in the boys' toilet. The plumbing traps to the bowls are not exposed; the partitions between the seats are of wood—a very undesirable practice—and there are no doors on the stalls. The recently installed ventilation system for the basement and the vigilance of the caretaker alone make the toilet arrangements bearable.

Fire Hazards: The building is not of fireproof construction, although the stairs are of metal. The doors open outward. At present one passageway between the fresh air flues and boiler room is partly

occupied by a pile of soft wood. At an earlier inspection it was choked with kindling wood and waste paper. There would be ample room for kindling if the basement were fully excavated. In one place under the quarters of the Penny Bank, joists were exposed. The plaster elsewhere is so thin and insecure that it offers little protection. Attention should be given to the plastering at once. Two portable fire extinguishers should also be installed.

General: There is no vacuum cleaning installation in the school. Neither are there any teachers' rest rooms. The teachers use the principal's office as a lunch room. There is no way of getting to the principal's office or the nurse's room except through a class-room. This is the cause of more or less noise and interruption of work, although these are reduced to a minimum.

There is one bath tub in the building, but this, quite properly, is not used.

Constituency According to its Present Provisional Boundaries.

The district served by the school lies between Queen Street on the north, and the Bay on the south, Yonge Street on the east, and John Street on the west. The population of the district is prevaillingly foreign, as shown by the parentage of the children. Out of a total membership in June, 1918, of 226, 63 were foreign born, 113 were of foreign parentage but Canadian birth, 37 were of Canadian birth and parentage, and 13 of British origin other than Canadian. The overwhelming majority of the children are of Jewish parentage, although Poles, Finns, Italians, Russians and Chinese are found in considerable numbers. One child is of mixed Canadian and Chinese parentage. As many children enter the school with absolutely no knowledge of English, and many others with a working knowledge only of Canadian slang and profanity, the teachers labor under an immense handicap from the start. In the kindergarten, during November of this school year, there were three Chinese children under six years of age who had been in the class only two weeks and could not speak a word of English.

Teaching Force.

The Staff: In June, 1918, the staff consisted of the principal and six teachers above the kindergarten. At present there are three teachers in the kindergarten. The principal has had eight years' experience in elementary teaching and over a year in other educational work. The teaching experience of other members of the 1918-1919 staff varies from two to twelve years, and the average was over five years. All had entirely satisfactory professional qualifications. All teachers on the present staff have been carefully observed in class-room, and all manifest a vital interest in their work.

The Principal's Day: Being one of the smaller schools, the Principal has no assistant, although the special difficulties of a school in such a foreign district are entirely out of proportion to such difficulties in schools located in purely English-speaking districts. As observed on several occasions, it is absolutely essential that the principal should leave his class-room for his office to interview some parent or settle some special

case. These things, as a rule, must be dealt with at once or not at all; rarely can they be shelved until a more favorable opportunity. The following schedule of how the principal spent one day is typical:

8.50- 9.10—Office.
9.10- 9.20—Opening exercises.
9.20- 9.30—Banking.
9.30-10.45—Teaching his class.
10.45-11.00—Recess—Banking.
11.00-12.00—Teaching his class.
1.20- 1.35—Office.
1.35- 2.30—Teaching his class.
2.30- 2.45—Recess.
2.45- 4.00—Teaching his class and various odds and ends of work.

This does not include telephone and other interruptions which, on some days, are very frequent. After school hours the principal frequently has to make calls in order to get first-hand information and be able to deal effectively with individual problems which face him. As there is no internal telephone system, communications to teachers must be written or delivered orally to the various rooms. If it were not for the assistance of teachers in making reports and controlling supplies, the principal's time would be cut into even worse than it is. What seems to be a very successful system of self-discipline and regimentation by the older pupils is also of great assistance. The principal's class needs him all the time. Other school matters need him a large part of the time. Many of these matters could be taken care of by a much less highly trained employee.

The York Street School is not only teaching the curriculum to its pupils, but is serving as a Canadianizing and civilizing influence among the adult community. The principal should have an adequate amount of time free for this community work, as well as for class-room instruction and supervision. The small size of the school should not be allowed to interfere with this. It is entirely probable that the more rapid progress of the children throughout this school and the increased thoroughness of their education might, even financially, offset the increased cost of additional help for the principal. Might not an assistant be engaged for two small schools, one employing his or her services in the morning and the other in the afternoon?

The School Nurse.

The school has a room set apart for the nurse sent from the Department of Public Health. The nurse spends her mornings at the school and returns in the afternoon, when necessary, to attend to special cases. The co-operation between the nurse and the teaching staff is remarkably good. The Bureau representative observed the work of the nurse and her co-operation with the staff for some time, and found that all concerned had an intimate personal knowledge of all the children in the school.

The individual record cards, recently installed, are in constant use and are kept up-to-date by the school and Health Department. This system in actual working out warrants fully the claims made for it by its advocates during the past five years. It is indispensable in a school like the York Street School, where in one year there were four principals, where the pupil turnover is so immense, and where so large a proportion of the children labor under handicaps which might otherwise be unknown to the teachers. The home visitation conducted by the nurse, often under great difficulties, is of inestimable value. The experience of the nurse in the homes has convinced her that the chief handicap of the school in securing its highest efficiency is the often almost intolerable housing conditions which exist in the neighborhood. The city, for its own protection, cannot afford to have a festering sore near its very heart, and steps should be taken at once to secure accurate data as to living and housing conditions in this and similar neighborhoods. In spite of all the difficulties, something must be done. To the statement, "We can't afford the expenditure," the obvious answer is, "We can't afford not to make the expenditure." It hardly seems sane to spend fifty dollars a year on the education of a child when the value of the expenditure is nullified, or worse, by home conditions.

The housing conditions are largely responsible for the dirty state in which many children come to school. Frequently pupils have to be sent home. The availability of the Harrison Baths is a great asset to the school. It has a good moral effect on the home to send back children for uncleanness, but it is not always desirable to do so in the case of young children or border-line cases. When the children are young and do not present outstanding examples of uncleanness, but need a bath, time would be saved and school conditions rendered more tolerable were a shower bath for each sex installed at the school. One of the first lessons in Canadian citizenship should be personal cleanliness, and if the home does not offer proper facilities, the school should.

THE CLASSES IN OPERATION.

The Kindergarten.

The kindergarten was visited on the morning of December 4th. One head teacher and two assistants were in charge, each having special care over a division. The members of the senior division are regularly promoted in January to the Junior First. The room is well lighted and decorated. The floor, however, cannot be kept clean enough for kindergarten purposes. As stated elsewhere, this is to be remedied shortly. The cloakroom of the kindergarten—as of all other class-rooms in the building—is a part of the main room, without separate ventilation. This is not desirable.

During the first of the period of observation the divisions were being conducted separately. All the children except five or six seemed interested in their work. The rest of the morning the class was conducted as a unit. The first exercise was the singing of the National Anthem and the saluting of the flag. This was very well done. This was followed by fourteen exercises, involving singing, educational games

and physical exercises in the form of games. The teachers participated freely, and the personal relation between teachers and pupils was very fine.

The chief value of this class lies in the sympathy of the teachers and of the human and humane example that they set. In some ways the work is being carried on under very undesirable and entirely unnecessary adverse conditions. There are at least four children in the class who should not be there. Below is a short description of each of these cases:

1. —————: 6 years of age. Clothes very dirty. His record shows him to be a low grade mental defective who should be at Orillia. A short time ago he knocked his baby sister unconscious.
2. —————: 4½ years of age. Makes inarticulate sounds and uses unintelligible expressions. Incessantly in motion. Clean and apparently well nourished. Motions in walking do not seem to be well co-ordinated. Held a doll in her arms and paid no attention to the exercises most of the time. Every once in a while would violently embrace some child. Made one boy cry bitterly. Impossible to do anything for this child at present, at least in a regular class.
3. —————: 10 years of age. In juvenile court before coming to school. No trouble as to order now. Deaf and dumb. Now learning to speak.
4. —————: 5 years of age. Deaf and dumb. Recommended for institution before, but not admitted on account of age. Brother in other class mentally deficient.

According to the Board's latest financial report the gross cost per pupil in actual attendance was \$56.40. This is really not the gross per capita cost but the actual per capita cost. The net per capita cost is placed at \$54.86 as a result of deducting revenues from grants and fees. Such revenues do not make the cost any less, they only supply more money to pay the costs. Moreover, this money comes from somewhere, and it is a pretty safe assumption that the provincial grants represent only a part of what is actually contributed by the citizens of Toronto. Again, fees paid by citizens do not diminish the cost—even the cost to citizens—any more than taxes paid by citizens diminish the cost.

The so-called net cost on the basis of "average number of pupils registered" is placed at \$44.09. The actual cost is some amount greater than this, but not stated. If it be placed at \$45 the cost of giving one year's schooling to the four children described above would be \$180.00. This is being absolutely wasted in most of the cases outlined; in fact, worse than wasted, as, if the children were placed in classes

adapted to their needs, good results might be obtained. At present the result in several cases is progressive deterioration and the formation of bad mental habits. The loss to other children cannot be measured. There can be no doubt, however, that the presence of such sub-normal children is one cause of retardation among normal children. Not only is the taxpayers' money wasted by this, but the children go out into life older than they otherwise would, perhaps with impaired habits of work and thought. If the general loss of the class through the presence of sub-normal children is equivalent to the total loss of time by four children, the loss from this cause would be \$180.00—a total of \$360.00 for the class. This amount would more than pay for the proper instruction of all the sub-normal children in the class. The normal children would progress faster, establish better habits of work, be more apt to go to high school, would become earlier producers and more effective citizens.

The handicap under which the teachers of sub-normal children in ordinary grades labor is discouraging and nerve-racking to the teacher, unkind to the children, unjust to the parents, dishonest to the taxpayers, and disastrous to the community.

The Junior First Grade.

This class was visited on the morning of December 9th. There were 28 children present, in two divisions—junior and senior. One division worked at their desks while the others were being instructed at the front of the room. Divisional exercises in arithmetic were observed and a class lesson in music. The work was well done, and an entire absence of the usual small technical defects in questioning and presentation was noticeable.

The class as a whole gave an impression that the majority of its members were below normal physically. The accuracy of this impression could only be tested by weight and height measurements. These did not appear on the record cards of the children. The children were sufficiently quiet and orderly, but little keen interest was displayed. This may have been due to temporary indisposition of some members, several of whom had severe colds, while others had bandages round their necks or ears. The impression of the observer was, however, that the apathy of many children was due to deep-seated causes for which the teacher and the school had no responsibility. The lighting was good and the ventilation fair. The air was very dry, a condition which could be remedied by the installation of evaporating pans on the radiator. Several of the pupils seemed fit candidates for an open-air room.

A dearth of material for seat work was noticeable. That available was made by the teacher herself at a great expenditure of time. Such material, especially in a school like the York Street School, should be supplied to the teacher in generous quantities. The teacher should be in a position to throw away any seat work devices as soon as they become soiled. The Board should not expect the teacher either to make or buy at her own expense any of the materials used in instruction.

Such material as can be made by the children to their educational advantage is quite another matter.

The supply of books for reading was quite adequate.

The personal cleanliness of many of the children was not up to par. Shower baths, as suggested, would be a godsend to the school. The children all appeared to be warmly clothed, although the cleanliness of the clothing in some cases was open to question. The cloak-room is a screened-off portion of the room, and has not, as it should have, separate ventilation.

Six children, or 20% of the total attendance on the day of the visit, appeared not to be fitted for regular class work. Below is a short description of them:

1. ————: a little over 6 years old. His record stated that "he is a borderline case whose development should be watched." Defective teeth. Later examination recommends ordinary class for one year longer. Examination difficult on account of youth.
2. ————: 7 years of age. Peculiar: slow: should be examined as to mentality. Defective nasal breathing; abnormal tonsils; digestive abnormality. Later examination classified as a borderline case. To be re-examined in a year.
3. ————: 6 years and 4 months of age. Defects in breathing, tonsils, teeth, glands; bad disease of the eyes. Very poor vision. Malformation of face and jaw bones. Record states her to be a mental defective who should receive institutional care.
4. ————: 7 years of age. Almost blind. Cannot take part in class exercises or do seat work. Sits quietly at his desk for hours at a time. If paper is given him, will spend long periods in tearing it into little pieces. Well nourished and apparently mentally normal, although no examination can, as yet, be made satisfactorily.

In addition to these, two French-speaking sisters, both of whom have defective teeth, and one defective hearing, should be examined as to their mentality.

The removal of the defective and abnormally slow children from this class for a school environment where they could make real progress, would transform the education of the normal children in the Junior First. The teacher could accomplish much more work with less labor and infinitely less worry, and the spirit of depression which is bound at times to settle down on the class-room under present conditions, would be permanently lifted. Hope and joy in accomplishment are essential elements in successful instruction.

The Senior First Grade.

The problems of the Senior First are identical although not so acute as those of the Junior First. A well conducted class in spelling

was observed. The slowing up of the class as a whole by atypical children was noticeable here as elsewhere. The shortage in equipment was also evident in this class. Children have to leave the room in order to use the pencil-sharpener, which does service for the whole school. A very large investment in pencil-sharpeners would have to be made before the interest and sinking fund charges thereon would equal the loss in time caused by an insufficient supply. Children's time is not cheap! As Lord Leverhulme would have it, "Wear out the equipment and save the worker."

In this room the records of 11 children showed either that they were defective, borderline cases, or should be referred for mental examination. It was understood that the medical examiners were to examine the latter cases immediately. (This examination was held later, and shows that at least five children are mentally defective.)

The Junior Second Grade:

In this grade classes were observed in arithmetic, geography and physical exercises. The room was well lighted, and the ventilation was kept good through the intelligent use of the windows. As a whole the children were alert, though the presence of misplaced children in the grade was quite noticeable. One boy is described on his record card as defective; three children are recommended for industrial classes, and one is described as being "below the average" in mentality. One boy, who had been described as an institutional case, woke up during the year and was promoted at the end of January well up in his class, although he had repeated the work four times, and until recently showed little, if any, signs of improvement. The section which was promoted into this grade from the lower grade at the mid-year promotion, appeared to be superior in scholarship and alertness to those left behind. It would seem that as soon as the class has settled down to its work it should be organized in two divisions, with quite distinct working programmes in most subjects. The work during the period of observation was somewhat interfered with by a leak in the roof and the ceiling below, due to the ice and snow which had accumulated. The arrangements for a roof garden, which have been installed but not used as yet, were blamed for the accident. One problem facing the teacher in this grade is an Italian boy of 14, who cannot speak a word of English. He is very bright and is a graduate of an Italian elementary school. Except in the English language, he is thoroughly equipped for the work of the school. One month in a special class concentrating on English would prepare him for work in a regular class and would save much time for him, his teacher, and the class of which he is now a member. One can hardly imagine a more extreme case of educational waste due to lack of adequate facilities to deal with exceptional children. (An examination of the Junior Second Grade, as constituted in February, 1920, showed four mental defectives.)

The Senior Second Grade:

Classes in spelling, reading and singing were observed, in all of which the children seemed responsive. The lighting of the room was good, but the ventilation was not as good as it might have been. The presence in the class of several comparatively mature Chinese students is in the nature of a handicap. Special language classes would soon prepare these pupils for membership in regular classes. The younger Chinese students seem to be fully up to the average of the grade. This grade also has several children who are mentally defective.

The Junior Third Grade:

Classes were observed in arithmetic and composition. The arithmetic was of a very practical nature, and related to the activities of the Penny Bank. As an inspiration to the composition class a piece of classical music was rendered on the Victrola. The compositions were in the form of interpretations of the music, or thoughts, or stories suggested thereby. Few, if any, of the children in this grade are mentally defective, as such children usually arrive at the age of fourteen before reaching the grade, and drop out of school. The boys of the grade receive only such training as can be done in the room. The girls of the grade, as well as some from the Senior Second, have the advantage of instruction at the Orde Street Centre. There can be no doubt that every boy in the school, as soon as he reaches the age of thirteen, no matter what grade he is in, should be given instruction at a manual training centre, and that the time set apart for this in the York Street School should be much longer than that assigned for a school in a good residential section.

NON-PROMOTION.

The problem of non-promotion is, as might be expected, a very serious one in the York Street School. The immense pupil turnover alone would explain a tremendous amount of it. While there were 400 pupils, exclusive of Chinese, enrolled in 1918-1919, only 184 were in membership at the end of the year. Of these, 97 were not promoted. The reasons given for non-promotion were as follows:—

Poor health.	13
Lack of interest on part of parents.	4
Lack of interest on part of pupils.	2
Irregular attendance, not due to ill-health.	13
Entrance late in term.	35
Feeble-mindedness.	12
Mentally slow.	11
Other causes.	7
<hr/>	
Total.	97

The living conditions of the neighborhood and too frequent attendance at the "movies" are no doubt responsible for a great part of the non-promotion.

An informal survey showed that a great many children of tender years in this district drink tea or coffee. A cup of tea, bread and butter, is a typical breakfast. Cocoa is sometimes used—milk, apparently, not so often. Porridge is a rare dish. Some children get their own breakfasts. Nearly all families, however, have meat and potatoes once a day.

In one family five people sleep in one room: father, mother and baby in one bed, and two boys in another. In another home 13 people live in seven rooms, and in another seven people live in four rooms. On the whole there would not seem to be as much overcrowding as might be expected, although the crowding in practice is worse, in some cases, than would be indicated by the number of inmates in comparison with the total number of rooms.

In those families studied, the time of rising and retiring was fairly satisfactory, although one boy of 7½ years retires habitually at 11.00 p.m., and a boy of 13 at 12 midnight. Of 89 children in the Junior Third, Senior Second and Junior Second, 14 went to the movies three times a week or oftener, ten twice a week, and 45 once a week. The attendance from the lower grades is light, but very considerable. It would seem that a method of presentation, such as the motion picture, evidently making such an appeal to the child mind, might be used to good advantage within the school room itself to teach Geography, History, Citizenship and current events. Its use for community amusement and cultural purposes in the evening and on Saturdays, when the children would be under control and their hours regulated, might be a wise extension of school functions in such a natural institutional school as the York Street School.

In this connection it might be well to raise the point whether there should not be an all-the-year-round school in the neighborhood. There might be four terms of twelve weeks each, three terms making a full school year. Teachers and children, who wished to do so and were in possession of certificates of physical fitness, could be allowed to attend the full 48 weeks in the school year, the teachers receiving proportional increases in pay. One advantage of the plan would be the opportunity afforded to teachers and pupils alike to rest from school during any one of the four terms. Children not capable of doing the regular work of the school could be given special work in the summer weeks, and might be taken on short trips to the lake and the country under the guardianship of teachers and specially trained supervisors. In fact, during the summer short educational trips might be a prominent feature in all school work.

Belated children, ambitious children of strong physique, etc., might greatly shorten or enrich their elementary school courses and might prepare for high school within the economic age for so doing. The summer sessions of such all-the-year-round schools should not be confounded with vacation schools, but would incorporate many of the excellent features of the latter. It would probably be found that many children

would benefit in health and morals by being fully occupied in worthwhile activities the year round.

The table below is of interest in considering the relation of foreign birth and ancestry to promotion:

Birth and Origin	Receiving Double Promotion	Promoted	Not Promoted
Children of Foreign birth and parentage	9.5%	46 %	44.5%
Children of Canadian birth and foreign parentage	10.6%	42.5%	46.9%
Children of Canadian birth and parentage	10.8%	35.1%	54.1%
Children born elsewhere in the British Empire and of British parentage.	15.4%	23.1%	61.5%

The pupils of British origin are comparatively few in number, and therefore no general conclusions can be drawn. Perhaps the large percentage of non-promotion among them is due to the naturally non-typical character of the British population in the district. There are apparently two British types: one anxious to get into better surroundings—indicated by the large percentage of double promotions—and the other satisfied with their surroundings or hopeless of bettering them. In any event, the mixture of unassimilated foreign children with under-privileged children of British origin is a tremendous handicap.

The slow progress of many pupils in the school is aggravated by the comparatively late entrance of children in the Kindergarten. The table on page 18* shows that 38.5% of the children in the Kindergarten during 1918-1919 were over the normal age. This is one cause of the tremendous percentage of over-age children throughout the six grades in this school. It also leads to much dropping out of children to go to work. Under existing conditions many children reach the age of 14 in the middle grades. During the year 1918-1919, six children left the Senior Second to go to work.

Evidence is not wanting that sometimes children under 14 manage to get employment. Leaving school without completing the public school course—the irreducible minimum in a democratic country—handicaps the children and is expensive and dangerous to society.

* Based on information kindly furnished by the teachers to the Bureau, on forms supplied for the purpose. There were a very few duplications in the figures presented, but not sufficient to affect the percentages appreciably.

Percentages of children under-age, normal age and over-age in the York Street School, 1918-1919, on the basis of 14 as the age of graduation and 6 as the age of beginning the work of the Junior First grade :

Grades	Over-age	Normal Age	Under-age
Kindergarten	38.5%	61.5%
Junior 1.....	51.1%	45.8%	3.1%
Senior 1.....	91.9%	8.1%
Junior 2.....	56.4%	41.0%	2.6%
Senior 2.....	63.9%	25.0%	11.1%
Junior 3.....	94.4%	5.6%

The extremely unusual fluctuations in the above percentages are probably due to the fluctuation in personnel of the children in attendance, or, in other words, the large pupil turnover. Work in a school of such uneven and uncertain quality must put a tremendous tax on the teachers.

In the York Street School there were, last June, 15 children who had been two years each in one grade: 2 of these in a half-year grade. Of the 15, nine failed of promotion in June and would again have to go over the work of the grades which they had already covered twice previously. One escaped by going to work. Surely these children would have been better served in a special advancement class.

A careful examination by the school psychiatrist, after the material for this study was collected, showed that among the 280 children in the present membership, 23—or 8.2% of the total—were in some way problems from the mental standpoint. Two were declared to be institutional cases, three were recommended for industrial classes or for institutions, two were recommended for industrial classes and two gave evidence of anti-social tendencies. It seems almost unbelievable that such a condition can still exist in this city.

The futility, and worse than futility, of trying to educate sub-normal children in regular classes, or normal children in classes containing a large number of sub-normal children, has been pointed out time after time. Certainly economy does not justify such a condition. Nothing could be much more uneconomical. Certainly justice to pupils, parents and teachers is not the motive. Nothing could be much more unfair to all concerned. Is it the fault of the community? The Bureau is informed that steps are to be taken by the Board of Education to provide a special class for this school, as well as a part time assistant to the principal. If this is not done and if the other necessary steps are not taken in the York Street School, and in every other school in the city where similar conditions exist, it will be the fault of the community.

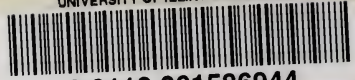
A NEIGHBORLY SUGGESTION.

At the present time York Street School, although beautifully clean for the most part, has little appeal to the aesthetic sense. It is not beautiful or home-like.

Few pictures are on the walls, and these, for the most part, have been donated by friends of the principal and staff. The down-town schools, for obvious reasons, from the standpoint of interior decorations and aesthetic appeal, should be equal if not superior to any in the city. In some of the finer residential districts, associations of parents have, at their own expense, produced wonderful results in class-room decoration. Might not such an association, having met its own school needs, adopt one of the down-town schools as a nucleus for an extension department? Might it not promote a similar association in some down-town school and co-operate with it in securing the results already obtained in the home school by the parent association?

If such co-operation were to become the fashion in Toronto, who can foretell how great the results to the community might become?

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